



Ashford Volunteer Fire Department

26

LT. David E. LaPorte
P.O. Box 1
46 Westford Road
Ashford, CT 06278
(860) 429-9862

Members of The Public Safety Committee,

My name is Lieutenant David LaPorte of the Ashford Volunteer Fire Department. I have been active in the volunteer fire service for over seventeen years. I served twelve years in the Tolland Fire Department from 1983 to 1995, and in the Ashford department from 2005 until present. I am certified to Firefighter III, Emergency Medical Responder, Fire Instructor I and Fire Officer I, and an honorably discharged US Army Reserve veteran (1981-1987). I am employed as a field service technician in the communications industry.

The purpose of my testimony is to support SB 551. Currently, Public Act 03-249 only applies to employees of the State of Connecticut, that also happen to be volunteer firefighters and/or emergency medical personnel. It offers the ability (with the prior authorization from the employer) of an employee to leave work in order to respond to fire or ambulance calls. It also protects the employee that may respond to emergency calls before reporting to work, causing the employee to arrive to work late, from suffering negative consequences. I believe all volunteer firefighters and emergency personnel should receive the same protection, regardless of who their employer is within the State of Connecticut.

According to NFPA statistics from 2009, 70% of the 30,165 fire departments in the United States are all volunteer. In Connecticut, volunteer fire departments remain a valuable resource to most communities by continuing to provide emergency services at low cost to taxpayers. These days, however, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain members, due to the commitment required for training. Our existing trained members must be available to respond as often as possible. Gaps in coverage may be filled by members that are able to have larger windows of opportunity to respond, if they know their employment won't be jeopardized. In my department for example, the average ambulance call is two hours from time of dispatch, until we are back in quarters. This means that the latest possible time I am able to respond Monday through Friday is 03:30 AM. Our paid staff comes on shift at 06:00 AM, leaving a gap of 2 ½ hours. This is true for many of our members, and is reflected in the number of missed calls that occur during that time period. As far as leaving work to respond to emergencies, I believe that due to the fact not many work in the town where they live, this would be a rare occurrence. Also, if not agreed to in advance between the employer and employee, the employee is risking their employment by leaving without authorization.

I believe this may be of great assistance to fire departments around the state, and urge the committee to vote favorably to move the process forward. Thank you.

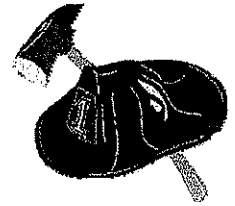
Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David E. LaPorte".

LT. David E. LaPorte



One-Stop Data Shop
Fire Analysis and Research Division
One Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169
Email: osds@nfpa.org
www.nfpa.org

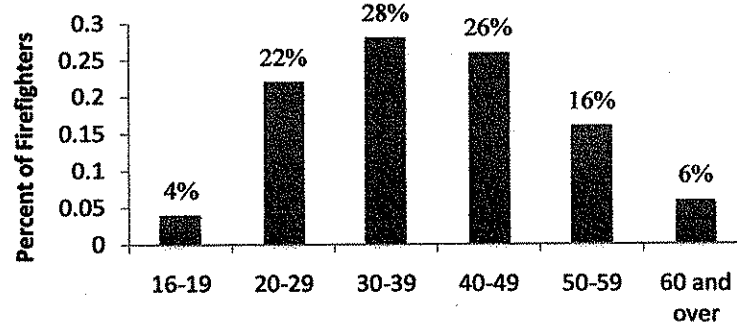


The U.S. Fire Department Profile Through 2009

There are **1,148,100** firefighters in the United States

- **29%** (335,950) are career firefighters.
- **71%** (812,150) are volunteer firefighters.
- Firefighters in smaller communities are more likely to be volunteers.
- Departments protecting larger communities tend to have a higher proportion of firefighters in the age groups 30-39 and 40-49 than smaller communities.

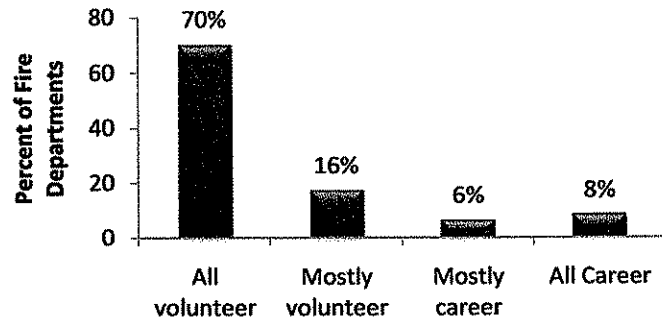
Number of Firefighters in the U. S. by Age Group, 2009



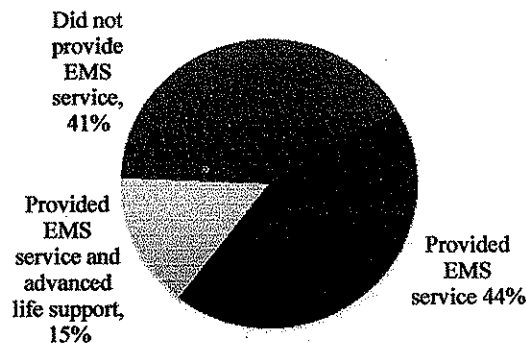
30,165 fire departments protected the United States in 2009

- All career 2,457
- Mostly career 1,752
- Mostly volunteer 5,099
- All volunteer 20,857

Fire Departments by Type, 2009



Fire Department Provision of Emergency Medical Service, 2007-2009 Annual Averages



Source: *U.S. Fire Department Profile Through 2009*, Michael J. Karter, Jr., NFPA, Quincy, MA, October 2010